

34/224. Medium-term planning in the United Nations

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 32/197 of 20 December 1977 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system and 33/118 of 19 December 1978, especially paragraph 4 thereof, in which it welcomed the intention of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to conduct an in-depth study of the programme planning process during its nineteenth session,

Having considered the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on the work of its nineteenth session,⁵⁰ the reports of the Secretary-General⁵¹ and of the Joint Inspection Unit⁵² on medium-term planning in the United Nations, and the comments of the Secretary-General thereon,⁵³

Considering that medium-term planning should, among other things, strengthen the relationship between planning and development and contribute to better and more rational management of United Nations activities, to better interagency co-ordination and to the attainment of the objectives of the new international economic order and of the international development strategies,

1. Takes note with satisfaction of the aforementioned reports;

2. Endorses the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on the work of its nineteenth session⁵⁴ and decides to establish the following principles and guidelines for medium-term planning in the United Nations:

(a) The planning process, which is a part of the over-all management process, should be forward-looking and dynamic; the plan should be deductive, with its strategy, orientation, goals and activities deriving from the objectives and policy orientations set by the intergovernmental organs;

(b) The medium-term plan should be a faithful translation of legislative mandates into programmes;

(c) The plan will remain a proposal until its adoption by the General Assembly, upon which it will become the principal policy directive;⁵⁵

(d) The medium-term plan should be comprehensive and not staggered;

(e) The flexibility of the plan should be achieved through reviews by intergovernmental organs as detailed as required to incorporate the programme implications of the resolutions and decisions adopted by those organs or international conferences since the adoption of the plan;

(f) The effective participation of central and regional, sectoral and functional bodies in the formulation, consideration, review and evaluation of the plan should be achieved by means of an appropriate preparation period and greater co-ordination of their calendars of meetings;

(g) The introduction to the plan, which constitutes a key integral element in the planning process, should

⁵⁰ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/34/38).*

⁵¹ E/AC.51/97 and Add.1 and 2.

⁵² See A/34/84.

⁵³ A/34/84/Add.1.

⁵⁴ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 38(A/34/38), paras. 304 and 305.*

⁵⁵ Reaffirmation of the principle already established in General Assembly resolution 31/93, para. 3 (c).

highlight the policy orientations of the United Nations system and indicate the medium-term objectives and strategy and the trends deduced from the mandates which reflect the priorities set by the intergovernmental organs;

(h) The plan should emphasize the description of objectives and strategy; the presentation and format of the analyses provided therein should vary according to the type and nature of activities;

(i) The plan should serve as the framework for the formulation of the biennial programme budget;

(j) The density of the information provided in the plan should vary in relation to the time-horizon of the planning and the needs of the reviewing bodies;

(k) The planning process should take into account the needs of interagency co-ordination; this co-ordination does not necessarily require system-wide synchronization of planning periods;

(l) Performance reporting and evaluation are key elements in the planning and programming cycle; the relevant mechanisms should be strengthened and the relevant techniques refined; the use of achievement indicators should be developed;

(m) The medium-term plan should cover a period of six years;

(n) The next medium-term plan should cover the period 1984-1989; accordingly, the submission of a proposed plan for the period 1982-1985, scheduled for 1980, is no longer required;

(o) The current plan should be reviewed at an appropriate time to take account of all decisions with programme implications during the biennium 1980-1981;

(p) The medium-term plan should clearly identify new activities; the planning process should also make it possible to identify completed activities or activities of marginal utility;

(q) Emphasis should be placed on objectives and strategy; objectives should be time-limited as far as possible and the plan should be objective-based in all programmes where that is feasible;

(r) Financial indications should be shown in the plan along the lines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report on the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983;⁵⁶

3. Approves the request made by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination⁵⁷ to the Secretary-General to submit to the Committee at its twentieth session a draft calendar of preparation for the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1984-1989 and, on the basis of general principles and specific recommendations formulated by the Committee at its nineteenth session, model programmes that would help to clarify the questions of the programme structure of the medium-term plan, the nature of the objectives of the plan and the possibility of defining time-limited objectives;

4. Requests the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to reconsider at its twentieth session the question whether the plan should be a "fixed" or a "rolling" plan, so as to enable the General Assembly to take a decision on that matter at its thirty-fifth session.

*111th plenary meeting
20 December 1979*

⁵⁶ A/33/345, paras. 7-11.

⁵⁷ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/34/38), para. 306.*